The Development Departments should be amalgamated.

The delay in the execution of minor irrigation works by the P. W. Department resulted in untold harships to the agriculturists. A separate Minor Irrigation Department should be organised.

DEWAN'S REPLY : Mr. Madhavan Nayar, I shall reply collectively to your representation on the Assembly and the administrative reforms after I have heard the other members who have to speak on the same subject. Besides these two, you referred to another matter to which I might say a word in reply. Your suggestions in regard to the reform of the system of education and the amalgamation of the Development Departments have been noted by the Government and will be made use of when occasion arises.

195. Reform of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.

MR. KRISHNA PILLAI MADHAVAN PILLAI (*Karunagapalli taluk, Group I*) said that it was surprising that a member proposed to urge the abolition of the Assembly while there was a pronounced movement of opinion in favour of its rejuvenation and reform. The suggestions made from time to time in the Assembly helped Government to achieve great reforms for the people of the land.

The institution was based on an executive order of Government. It should be given statutory recognition.

The Assembly should be made more representative by lowering the franchise. The property qualification of voters should be lowered. The sex disqualification should be removed and all graduates should be enfranchised. Important representations should be discussed and voted upon in the Assembly. A representative of the Assembly should be nominated to the committees appointed by Government from to time for other than legislative purposes. Representations should be replied to by the respective Heads of Departments.

A committee consisting of representatives of the Legislative Council and of the Assembly should be appointed for drafting a revised constitution on the above lines.

196. The necessity for discontinuing the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly and for delegating its present functions along with other functions conducive to the development of self-government to Taluk Boards to be newly constituted on an elective basis under a wider franchise and composed of a non-official majority of three to one.

MR. V. CHANDY ITTY (*Kottayam taluk, Group I*) said that it was pure sentimentalism to preach the retention of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly which, however beneficial it might have been in the past, had outgrown its usefulness. The Legislative Council, as remodelled in 1097, had superseded the Assembly in constitutional importance. The case made out for the continuance of the Assembly was that it made possible some sort of personal contact between the Government and the governed. But that advantage was hardly commensurate with the worry involved.

There was an important section of the public who realised the growing importance of the Assembly and who consequently demanded its immediate reformation. They suggested reforms which would elevate the Assembly to the level of the Legislative Council. They advocated the right of tabling motions, of discussion and debate, of asking interpellations and of voting grants. Those drastic and radical changes supported the inference that the reformers themselves were fully alive to the futility of the Assembly. If their advice prevailed, Travancore would be under the sway of a bi-cameral legislature which would be unparalleled in the constitution of any civilized country. If such a legislature existed in England and at Delhi, there was a clear political demarcation between the respective Houses. But the members of the two legislative chambers in Travancore would be identical in almost every respect. If the constitution of the existing Council was in any way defective, the reformers might advocate the necessary changes. If they had no faith in its personnel, they could go out to the electorate and educate the voters.

The lack of enthusiasm displayed by the electorate towards the Assembly should afford ample justification to Government for abolishing it. Government were aware that the majority of representatives were elected *nem con* and that only an infinitesimal fraction of the elections was contested. It signified not a magnanimous recognition of the merits of the candidates who came forward, but only the depth of lethargy into which the electorate had sunk ever since the expansion of the Legislative Council in 1097.

The members came to the Assembly as a set of petition-mongers, mainly to focus the attention of Government on the respective local needs. No tangible result was produced by the representations and the same question had to be taken up over and over again in succeeding sessions.

Important local questions could be solved only by a partial decentralisation of Government, which should be achieved through the abolition of the cumbrous and costly machinery and the establishment of the cheaper and more efficient local boards. The institution of Taluk Boards would be successful for many reasons. If they were constituted on a truly democratic basis, with a non-offical majority of two to one, and assured of a fairly long duration, the best sons of the soil would come forward to assist Government. It would be the least expensive machinery to which Government could safely delegate some of its functions. Being conversant with the local conditions, the Board would be more fitted to suggest constructive and practical programmes. It should be given the right to deal in conjunction with Government, with the departments of Education, Public Health, Excise, Trade and Industry and Public Works. As long as there was no party system in Travancore and Government was not responsible to the legislature, that was the only method which would ensure balance between the Government and the governed. Government should give up the practice of sanctioning budget provision to the departments and should make consolidated allotments to each taluk.

DEWAN'S REPLY: I had said that I would reply at the end to the representations made by members who spoke on administrative reform in its various aspects. Some of you have advocated an Executive Council and some have urged that the rights and privileges now allowed to the representatives of the people in the Legislative Council and in the Popular Assembly should be extended. I need not tell you, because it is recognised by all of you and it was also specially mentioned by some of you in the course of your representations, that our Rulers have always been solicitous of the welfare of the people and the rights which are now being enjoyed by the people are those that have been voluntarily conceded by our benign Rulers.

As regards the specific representation relating to the creation of an Executive Council and the extension of the powers of the Legislative Council, I may refer you to the reply given by the Dewan at the last session of the Assembly to similar representations. But I would not leave it there. I would add just a few words of my own. I would say that our past experience must have shown us that there is no need for us to be impatient. It would only be wise and proper on our part to leave it to our Rulers who, at the fit and proper time, gave the people the privileges they now enjoy, to extend those privileges further at the fit and proper time.

As regards the Assembly, I have to say a few words especially because at this session we had not only representations that the constitution of the Assembly should be reformed but even one that it should be abolished. I may say from the representations that we had here, that in one form or another those who have spoken on the subject have expressed their dissatisfaction with the way in which the Popular Assembly is now constituted and conducted. And, as I have already said, one of you has gone the length of advocating its abolition.

Let me tell you in the first place that I am far from sharing your pessimism, and do not at all agree with the view of the member who suggested the abolition of the Assembly on the ground that it has outgrown its usefulness. (*Applause*). I am even led to suspect that that representation had—it sounded so to my ears—a sort of cynical or ironical twang. I do not think that, in his heart of hearts, the member who made that representation himself wants the institution to be abolished. I take it that he put his case for the reform of the Assembly in an extreme form in order to emphasise his dissatisfaction with present condition.

Successive Dewans have testified to the great usefulness of this institution and referred to the several important reforms in the administration of the State for which this Assembly has been in the main the contributory cause. Its achievements have been the result of its carrying out efficiently the purpose for which it was created by our late Maha Raja of revered memory. (*Cheers*). It has brought the people of the country, the ryots and the industrialists, into close and personal touch with the Head of the Administration and given him a unique

opportunity of learning directly the defects in the administration of the State and the urgent needs of the people. The constant solicitude of our Rulers for the real welfare of their people has tended to remove from time to time those defects and to supply, as far as possible, those needs. This valuable feature of the institution is what has impressed me too in the proceedings of this session, the first at which I have had the pleasure and the privilege of seeing it work, as it were, from the inside. I have been struck by the earnestness, the thoughtfulness and the intimate knowledge of details with which the several subjects were handled by the members. I have felt that this characteristic feature of the institution is one that is too precious to be parted with.

You have pointed out certain directions in which you think the rules for the constitution of the Assembly stand in need of modification. It is, I am sure every one will admit, an important and difficult subject. I shall take it up for earnest examination and consideration.

I shall have very great pleasure in conveying to Her Highness the Maha Rani Regent the expressions of sincere loyalty that have been made in this Assembly towards Her Highness and the Ruling House.

Just one word more before I close. On your behalf, Mr. Madhavan Pillai expressed your satisfaction with, and your appreciation of, the way in which I conducted this the first session of the Assembly over which I preside. I thank you all.

The Assembly was prorogued at 5-40 P. M.